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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3824th meeting of the Security Council, held on 20 October 1997 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Croatia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council welcomes the report of the Secretary-General of 2 October 1997 (S/1997/767), on the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), and agrees with its balanced and objective assessment.

"The Security Council notes with approval several positive actions taken by the Government of Croatia which are contained in the report, as well as those which have occurred since the report was issued. These developments include the recent agreements relating to education, progress on the reintegration of the judiciary, the law on convalidation, moves towards recognition of pensioner service, assistance to local governments and municipalities, and provision to UNTAES of documentation on 25 war crimes cases. The Council is also encouraged by the increased cooperation with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The Council expects the Government of Croatia to continue to build upon these positive steps and accelerate its efforts in order fully to complete these initiatives.

"The Security Council welcomes the recent establishment by the Government of Croatia of a programme for national reconciliation. A final assessment of this programme must await its full and prompt implementation.

"The Security Council continues to note with concern that there are still many outstanding areas and issues of contention and non-compliance, which require further, urgent action from the Government of Croatia. The Council reiterates its call to the Government of Croatia to curb media attacks on ethnic groups. The Council also underlines, in particular, the importance of the removal of all legal and administrative barriers, thus allowing the accelerated voluntary two-way return of displaced persons, including their right to choose to live in the region, as well as the

return of refugees. It calls upon the Government of Croatia to give immediate effect to recent decisions of the Constitutional Court regarding the Law on the Temporary Takeover and Administration of Specified Property, and to take further action to promote the safe return of owners to their homes and the resolution of the issue of lost tenancy rights, including ensuring access to reconstruction assistance.

"Much progress in these and other outstanding areas must be made on an urgent basis, in order for the Government of Croatia to comply fully with its obligations and create the conditions for a successful completion of UNTAES. For its part, the local Serb population must also take more active measures to participate in the reintegration process.

"The Security Council notes the urgent need for all local government bodies in the region, particularly the City Council of Vukovar, to commence full normal functions immediately.

"The Security Council expresses its concern about the behaviour of some officers of the Transitional Police Force, and urges full cooperation with UNTAES in improving the performance of this Force. The Council approves the intention of the Secretary-General to retain United Nations civilian police and military observers at current levels to the end of the UNTAES mandate. The Council also notes the need to address concerns relating to the continuation of police monitoring functions.

"The Security Council welcomes the close cooperation between UNTAES and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in expanding the long-term mission of the OSCE in Croatia.

"The Security Council shares the assessment of the Secretary-General that there is sufficient time for Croatia to comply fully with its obligations and commitments before 15 January 1998 and urges the Government of Croatia to redouble its efforts in the time remaining. The Council looks forward to the next report of the Secretary-General on all aspects relevant to the peaceful reintegration of the region, due by the beginning of December."